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Benjamin Edwards.

The Father of Ninian Edwards, Governor of Illinois Territory.

BY ERNEST MACPHERSON.

Benjamin Edwards, son of Haden (Heydon) Edwards and Penelope (Sanford) Edwards, was born August 12, 1753, in Stafford County, Virginia; removed to Montgomery County, Maryland, and married Margaret, daughter of Ninian Beall.

Margaret Beall in her girlhood days was known as the "Beauty of Montgomery." She was a descendant of General Ninian Beall, a man of note in the Colonial wars.

Benjamin Edwards lived for many years in Maryland on his farm, known as Mount Pleasant. He was never a candidate for any office, but represented his county in the Legislature, was a member of the Maryland convention which ratified the Federal Constitution for which he voted, and was later a member of Congress from his State. He was a lieutenant in the Revolutionary War and was a Baptist in religion.

He removed to Kentucky and was a large land owner. He died November 13, 1826, and was buried on his old home place at Elkton, Todd County, Kentucky. His wife predeceased him a few months. He was known as the "patron of William Wirt," for some time Attorney General of the United States, who in his young manhood was a tutor in the family of Benjamin Edwards. Mr. Wirt wrote the obituary with which this sketch concludes.

The children of Benjamin and Margaret Edwards were:

1. Ninian Edwards—Born Montgomery County, Maryland, March, 1775. Married Elvira Todd. Died, Belleville, Illinois, July 20, 1853.
2. Mary Edwards—Born Montgomery County, Maryland, 1777; died at Elizabethtown, Kentucky. Married (1) Henry Whitaker, brother of William White Whitaker, (2) Major

Benjamin Helm of Elizabethtown, Kentucky. She was grandmother of B. H. Bristow, Secretary of Treasury under Grant.

3. Penelope Edwards—Born Stafford County, Virginia, January 18, 1779. Married William White Whitaker of Maryland, afterwards of Russellville, Kentucky, January 3, 1794. Died, Logan County, Kentucky, January 5, 1845.

4. Elisha Beall Edwards—Born, May 11, 1781, Montgomery County, Maryland. Died, Elkton, Kentucky, October 13, 1823. Married (1) Lucy Richardson, of Mercer County, Kentucky, February 1, 1811; (2) Martha Feliciana Upshow, of Virginia, in Christian County, Kentucky.

5. Presley Edwards—Born, October 7, 1784. Married at Lexington, Kentucky, Hester Pope, November 22, 1810. Died, Russellville, Kentucky, 1833.

6. Elizabeth Edwards—Born, August 8, 1786, Montgomery County, Maryland. Died, January 30, 1833, Elkton, Kentucky. Married John Gray.

7. Lucretia Maria Edwards—Born, January 14, 1792, Montgomery County, Maryland. Died near Dalton, Georgia, July, 1863. Married General Duff Green, near Bardstown, Kentucky, November 25, 1813.

8. Cyrus Edwards—Born, January 17, 1793, Montgomery County, Maryland. Died, Upper Alton, Illinois, August 31, 1877. Married (1) Nancy H. Reed, in 1819; (2) Sophia Loomis, Alton, Illinois.

9. Matilda Edwards—Died, Christian County, Kentucky, May 31, 1878. Married Rev. Franceway Ranna Cossitt, January 19, 1834.

10. Rachel Edwards—Married Rev. William C. Warfield.

11. Margaret Edwards — Died, Princeton, Kentucky. Never married.

12. Benjamin Franklin Edwards — Born, Danestown, Maryland, July 2, 1797. Died, Kirkwood, Missouri, 1877. Married Eliza Green, 1819.

13. Washington Edwards—Died young.

Obituary of Benjamin Edwards.

“Died on the 13th of November, 1826, at his residence in Elkton, Todd County, Kentucky, Benjamin Edwards, in the seventy-fourth year of his age, and the fifty-sixth of his Christian life. His venerable consort, Mrs. Margaret Edwards, after a union of more than fifty years, had preceded him to the grave about three months before. They both resigned this world with that perfect composure and full assurance of future happiness which religion alone can inspire, and left behind them a numerous and respectable family of children and their descendants to imitate their virtues and to deplore their loss. Mr. Edwards was a native of Stafford County, Virginia; and before he became of age, he intermarried with Margaret, the daughter of Ninian Beall, of Montgomery County, Maryland, and resided, for nearly twenty-five years, on his farm of Mount Pleasant, about nine miles above the court house of that county. His pursuits were those of agriculture and merchandise, which he conducted with industry and irreproachable integrity. He had not the advantage of a classical education, but nature had given him a mind of extraordinary force and comprehension, and a moral character of uncommon elevation and energy. He was one of nature’s great men; and it had stamped this character most strikingly on his countenance and person. He was large and well-formed; his countenance strongly marked with intelligence and benevolence; his steps and movements uncommonly dignified and commanding, and in his whole action there was an easy, unaffected, natural gracefulness which proclaimed the gentleman and the man of feeling in a manner not to be mistaken. Though his manners were highly prepossessing, conciliatory, and kind, yet such was the dignity that surrounded him, and the respect with which he impressed all who approached him, that no man ever dreamed of using irreverent liberty or indulging a thoughtless levity in his presence. His colloquial powers were unrivalled in any company in which the writer of this article ever saw him. He had a manly and melodious voice, a natural

fluency and eloquence that never hesitated, the most striking originality and vigor of thought, the aptest and happiest illustration drawn from objects of nature around him, and an accuracy and integrity of judgment which have never been surpassed on the subjects which called for his decision. He had supplied the deficiencies of youthful education by careful reading, and had acquired a correct style which was yet marked with the native strength and originality of his thoughts, and he conversed with great power even on subjects of literature, taste, and science, and many have been the flip-pant scholars and collegians, who, after the interchange of a few remarks, have felt themselves rebuked by his superior mind, and learned to listen with instinctive reverence and delight. He had made himself an excellent historian, both in ancient and modern history; and to his children and their young companions (of whom the writer was one), with whom he always took pleasure in conversing, he was one of the most instructive companions whom the kindness of Providence could have sent them. Though always pious, there was nothing austere, obtrusive, or revolting, in his religion; and in his domestic circle he would often indulge himself with great playfulness, and with the most successful humor; yet no occasion was ever lost of instilling into them pure and honorable, and lofty sentiments and principles, and kindling in them the flame of patriotic and virtuous emulation, holding up to them, with great eloquence, the examples of ancient patriots, orators and statesmen, with whom he was as much enamored as if he were still in his youth. He rose to considerable distinction before he left Maryland, which was about thirty years ago. He represented the county of Montgomery for several years in the state legislature; was a member of the state convention which ratified the Federal Constitution, and afterwards a member of Congress for the district in which he lived. Though nature had made him an orator of high order, he spoke but rarely, and then only on local subjects, when forced forward by a high sense of duty; yet on one of these occasions, in the assembly of Maryland, with so much force did he strike the house, that the late Samuel Chase and several others of the most competent judges of eloquence in that body, crossed the floor of the house to congratulate him, and to assure him that it rested with himself to become

one of the most distinguished speakers of the age. But he was restrained by aversion to politics from profiting by this suggestion, and a man who may be justly pronounced to have been one of nature's happiest efforts, has now passed away, to be forgotten by the world. Never will he be forgotten by the grateful heart from which this humble tribute flows; nor that excellent woman who was the fit and happy counterpart of so extraordinary a man. They were both an honor to their species, ornaments to the church to which they belonged, and are now among the spirits of the blessed who surround the throne on high.

WILLIAM WIRT."